

STATUS OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 11-18, 20, 22, 23, 26-28 are pending in the application. Claims 19, 21, 24-25 and 29 were previously cancelled. Claims 27 and 33-38 were previously withdrawn pursuant to a restriction requirement. Independent claims 11 and 18 are hereby amended. Support for the amendments to independent claims 11 and 18 may be found in the specification and claims as originally filed, and particularly, paragraph [0019] and Figures 1, 2, 3A-3E, and 6. No new matter is added by the changes.

Thus, by this amendment, Applicants states that the outstanding rejections have been overcome and requests that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance at the earliest opportunity.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) on the Basis of SCHWARTZ-FELDMAN

The Examiner has rejected Claims 11, 17, and 31-32 as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) on the basis of Schwartz-Feldman (US Patent No. 5,501,371) ("SCHWARTZ-FELDMAN"). This rejection is respectfully traversed in light of the amendments to Claims 11 and 18, noting that Claims 17, 31 and 32 depend from claim 11 directly or indirectly.

In response, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection and its accompanying remarks, and further states that the rejection has been rendered moot by the amendment of rejected independent claims 11 upon which the remainder of the rejected claims relies. Specifically, independent claims 11 and 18 have been amended pursuant to a telephonic conference with Examiner Schell on December 14, 2009, during which the Examiner stated that the pending claims appear to be allowable upon the amendment of claims 11 and 18 as proposed in this amendment. Applicants kindly request entry of the amendments. Upon entry, Applicants states that the rejection will have been overcome and requests that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance at the earliest opportunity.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) on the Basis of SCHWARTZ-FELDMAN

The Examiner has rejected Claims 18, 20, 22, 23 and 30 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) on the basis of SCHWARTZ-FELDMAN.

In response, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection and its accompanying remarks,

and further states that the rejection has been rendered moot by the amendment of rejected independent claims 18 upon which the remainder of the rejected claims rely. Specifically, independent claims 11 and 18 have been amended pursuant to a telephonic conference with Examiner Schell on December 14, 2009, during which the Examiner stated that the pending claims appear to be allowable upon the amendment of claims 11 and 18 as proposed in this amendment. Applicants kindly request entry of the amendments. Upon entry, Applicants states that the rejection will have been overcome and requests that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance at the earliest opportunity.

Rejection Under 35 USC 103(a) Based on SCHWARTZ-FELDMAN in View of CRITCHLOW

The Examiner has rejected Claims 12-16 as being unpatentable over SCHWARTZ-FELDMAN in view of Critchlow et al (U.S. Patent Application Number 2003/0171712) (“CRITCHLOW”).

In response, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection and its accompanying remarks, and further states that the rejection has been rendered moot by the amendment of independent claim 11 upon which rejected claims 12-16 rely. Specifically, independent claims 11 and 18 have been amended pursuant to a telephonic conference with Examiner Schell on December 14, 2009, during which the Examiner stated that the pending claims appear to be allowable upon the amendment of claims 11 and 18 as proposed in this amendment. Applicants kindly request entry of the amendments. Upon entry, Applicants states that the rejection will have been overcome and requests that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance at the earliest opportunity.

Rejection Under 35 USC 103(a) Based on SCHWARTZ-FELDMAN in View of BARKER

The Examiner has rejected Claims 26 and 28 as being unpatentable over SCHWARTZ-FELDMAN in view of Barker et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,033,105) (“BARKER”).

In response, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection and its accompanying remarks, and further states that the rejection has been rendered moot by the amendment of rejected independent claims 11 and 18 upon which rejected claims 26 and 28 rely, respectively.

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Specifically, independent claims 11 and 18 have been amended pursuant to a telephonic conference with Examiner Schell on December 14, 2009, during which the Examiner stated that the pending claims appear to be allowable upon the amendment of claims 11 and 18 as proposed in this amendment. Applicants kindly request entry of the amendments. Upon entry, Applicants states that the rejection will have been overcome and requests that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance at the earliest opportunity.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, Applicant submits that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes there are still unresolved issues, a telephone call to the undersigned would be welcomed.

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Respectfully submitted,

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